interview or political speech. Now how could you keep identities confidential? The point is that the same ethical principles may involve different considerations when working with visual data, and that these considerations are important to think about at all stages of the research process, from design to implementation to dissemination.

The following seven issues represent what we believe to be the key ethical considerations in visual research. As you read and think about these issues, it is important to keep in mind that this is not an ingredient list for ethical research. It is not a recipe you can simply follow. Rather, each of these items is an issue for you to carefully consider as it relates to your own research and the relevant parties. We follow the presentation of these key issues with an illustrative example and a related case study.

1. *Representational authority.* Who controls the perspectives from which images are created? Should researchers get to decide how they depict those they work with? Should it be up to those represented in the images? What about interested audiences (such as funding agencies, or the oft-cited public's right to know)? Such choices involve a triadic research relationship between three groups: researchers, subjects/participants, and audiences (Crawford and Simonsen 1992: 3). And each of these groups may contain a range of perspectives. Should you, as the researcher, get to decide how to depict something about a group of people or a particular site? Should the people themselves get to decide, regardless of your research goals? Does an outside public (such as a research sponsor) have the right to choose which people and activities get recorded and which do not?

2. *Decontextualization/circulation of images (and the problem of lack of control).* Once you have created an image, (a) how and where does it get used, and (b) who has control over those decisions? If you post something on a research-specific website, who has access? If it is only presented to a limited audience, what about ethical guidelines on the importance of publicizing research findings? If publicly posted, what about outside parties who can now copy and disseminate images that could be personal, private, or even sacred? What about the fact that such further circulation and use of images may well take place out of context?[2]

3. *Presumed versus actual outcomes of image display.* Because images can be perceived differently by viewers, they can generate different outcomes than originally intended. Before using an image—whether as part of the research or in the reporting process—try and step away from how you think about and see an image, and ask how others *could* see the same image. How might friends of those depicted view it? How about family members, political rivals, or enemies? What if an audience misses your intended point? What if people with a different background do not *see* the same nuances you do, and focus instead on what they consider unenlightened, superficial, or even barbaric practices? What if the people involved in your research see themselves as being ridiculed? What if outside viewers see your images as confirming their beliefs about "less developed" foreigners, the impoverished, or the disenfranchised?

4. *Relations with and responsibilities toward research subjects/communities.* We all begin research with particular agendas, usually to answer specific sets of questions. Getting answers, however, is not the only or even the most important consideration in the field. Rather, because we are working with human subjects (or even non-human subjects, such as Zeller's case study in Chapter 3) we have responsibilities to them that must come first. As noted earlier, taking the wishes of research subjects and communities into account helps maintain good rapport both for current research and for future researchers. Even if this is not the case, why should our own academic projects trump the wishes of others? We are talking about other people's lives, and it is important to remember that the repercussions of our actions can last long after we leave the field.

5. *Balancing privacy versus publicity, depending on subjects' wishes.* One tenet of ethical research is to publicize research work and findings, rather than hoarding such knowledge for one's self. At the same time, some information can be sensitive, whether for personal, professional, or other reasons. Whether it is to protect confidential data, avoid embarrassment, or respect others' sacred beliefs, the decisions we make about reporting our research findings need to be informed by careful consideration and respect for the subjects' wishes.

6. *The importance of communication with and consent of subjects and communities at every stage of the research process.* While the idea of **informed consent** is fairly well established among researchers in the social sciences, it is critical to remember that research subjects typically do not have the same academic background that you do. "So what?" you may ask, "As long as they consent isn't that good enough?". In a word: No. Do they understand how, where, and why their images will be used? Do they understand who will have access to these images? If not, their consent is not *informed.* Do your subjects realize that they can say "no" to you without adverse consequences? What if your subject's culture considers it improper or hostile to deny a request? And what if people allow you to take pictures of them at work or with their family, but then change their mind? Do they understand that they can withdraw their consent on the spot, after a night's sleep and consideration, the next week, or even later? Once you know what images you plan to use, and in what ways, have you informed your subjects and confirmed that you still have their consent? What about people who insist on you using an image that you would prefer not to use?

7. *The collection and dissemination of visual materials within the context of globally expanding media savvy and presence.* The previous six issues need to be considered in light of modern technology and circumstances. Photos and video footage from years past were typically published on the other side of the planet and in a completely foreign language from the people they depicted.[3] With Internet access, however, people now can access a vast range of materials. The ever-expanding awareness of and access to the Internet may have significant repercussions that you must think about as part of conducting responsible research.

Sometimes it is easy to know what is the right (or wrong) thing to do. Most of the time real life situations are more complicated, meaning that these issues will